



## E-NEWS from *Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn*

An electronic legislative update for July 17, 2002

### Did you know?

**The fiscal year 2003 Interior spending bill includes \$23.8 million that was secured by Jennifer to benefit Washington State.**

Specific projects include the following:

- **\$2.7 million** for electrical upgrades at Mt. Rainer National Park.
- **\$4.4 million** for the construction of dormitories for seasonal employees at Mt. Rainier.
- **\$244,000** for rehabilitation of the Paradise Guide House at Mt. Rainier. (These dollars will complete the rebuilding of the Guide House.)
- **\$4 million** for continued development of Ramgen technology. (Ramgen technology utilizes environmentally-friendly engines to generate electricity using methane gas from coalmines.)
- **\$4.5 million** for the purchase of Plum Creek Option lands in the I-90 corridor. (This funding will allow the Forest Service to purchase 6,530 acres of Plum Creek Timber Company lands, all of which were identified in the I-90 land exchange legislation passed in 1998.)
- **\$4 million** for additional funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the Washington Timber Fish and Wildlife Initiative. These funds will help stabilize tribal involvement with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.
- **\$4 million** to continue the Puget Sound and Coastal Washington Hatchery Reform Project, which began in 1999.

**The US House is scheduled to consider the Interior spending bill this week.**



Jennifer recently sponsored the 2002 “*Artistic Discovery*” high school art competition. The winner (pictured right of Jennifer) is Tabatha Brown of Mercer Island High School. Her acrylic self-portrait (also pictured) is currently being displayed in the US Capitol with other winning works of art from around the nation. Pictured left is Tabatha’s art teacher, Cyndy Jensen.

## What is going on this week?

### **US HOUSE IS SCHEDULED TO CONSIDER A BILL FUNDING THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003**

In addition to the \$23.8 million for projects requested by Jennifer (see above), the Interior spending bill increases funding for fighting wildfires, it increases funding for energy research to help identify solutions to the increasing burdens on family budgets caused by high energy costs and it allocates dollars for dozens of national conservation programs. It also funds the Fish and Wildlife Service and programs to protect threatened and endangered species, the National Park Service for operations and maintenance of millions of acres of public lands and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for education, health care and infrastructure for Native American tribes throughout the nation.

### **US HOUSE IS SCHEDULED TO CONSIDER FISCAL YEAR 2003 POSTAL SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY SPENDING BILL**

Later this week, the US House is scheduled to consider the fiscal year 2003 Treasury, Postal spending measure. Nearly one quarter of funds in the bill will strengthen homeland security by modernizing US Customs Service information systems that are critical for border security. This is particularly important to Washington State which shares a long border with Canada and has several busy ports. The spending bill also includes an increase in funding to fight drug trafficking in areas where drug trafficking is prevalent and it provides dollars to help the IRS continue to upgrade its information technology system so that can be more helpful to American taxpayers.

### **US HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO ENHANCE CYBER SECURITY**

The “Cyber Security Enhancement Act of 2002” has been approved by the US House. The bill helps protect the privacy of individuals who use computers in their homes and it saves taxpayers millions of dollars by cracking down on hackers who break into corporate and government computer systems. The bill increases penalties for cyber crimes to better reflect the seriousness of the crime and it makes it easier for local law enforcement agencies to gather information about cyber criminals.

## **BILL TO HELP STUDENTS, MINORITIES OBTAIN STUDENT LOANS PASSES US HOUSE**

Jennifer voted earlier this week in support of a bill that helps students receive their student loan disbursements faster and helps students avoid defaulting on their student loans. Specifically, it expedites the process for students to enter into “forbearance” (a temporary period whereby loan payments do not have to be made) during times of economic hardship. With the increasing cost of college tuition and downturn in the nation’s job market, it is important for students to have quick access to loans for which they were approved and for loan payment forgiveness when there is a real need.

## **What we did last week;**

### **BILL TO ALLOW PILOTS TO CARRY GUNS IN COCKPITS PASSED THE US HOUSE**

The House has approved HR 4635, the “Arming Pilots Against Terrorism Act.” The program allows qualified pilots to carry guns in cockpits. Qualified pilots include those who have military or law enforcement backgrounds or have received intensive training administered by the Transportation Security Administration. By allowing qualified pilots to carry guns, we provide a last line of defense against committed, creative terrorists and security lapses at airports.

### **HOUSE UNANIMOUSLY PASSES ARMED SERVICES TAX FAIRNESS ACT**

By a vote of 412-0, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill to provide additional tax relief for military personnel selling their homes and for families of those killed during military service. Under current law, a family receives a \$6,000 death benefit when their loved one is killed in service. Unfortunately, half of that amount is subject to income tax. The Armed Services Tax Fairness Act completely exempts it from tax. The bill also liberalizes the rules for the primary residence capital gains exclusion so that time away from home counts towards satisfying the five-year holding period to qualify for the exclusion. A soldier fighting for our freedom does not sacrifice alone; the family must endure financial hardship, separation from a loved one, and concern for their well-being. We want to honor these brave soldiers and their families by easing the burden of military life.

### **HOUSE APPROVES LEGISLATION TO SPEED AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION**

The US House has approved legislation that streamlines and expedites the process for expanding runways in our nation’s airports. Over the past 20 years, air travel in the US has grown faster than any other mode of transportation, but airport runway capacity has not kept pace with growth. Prior to September 11, one of four commercial flights was delayed because of air traffic congestion. Air traffic is quickly approaching pre-September 11 levels, so the need to expand runway capacity must be addressed. In order for an airport to expand its runways, dozens of approvals and environmental impact studies must be conducted by numerous state, local and federal agencies—a process that can take up to ten years. This bill streamlines the approval process by allowing these approvals and environmental impact studies to be conducted at the same time. It allows the Department of Transportation to place deadlines on agencies for conducting studies and forces them to report to Congress if the deadline is not met. Jennifer supported the measure.